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Montana's Foster Parent

sharing **News** caring

challenging

Ann Burds — Social and Rehabilitation Services, 836 Front Street, Helena, Montana

August-September, 1973

letter of introduction. . .

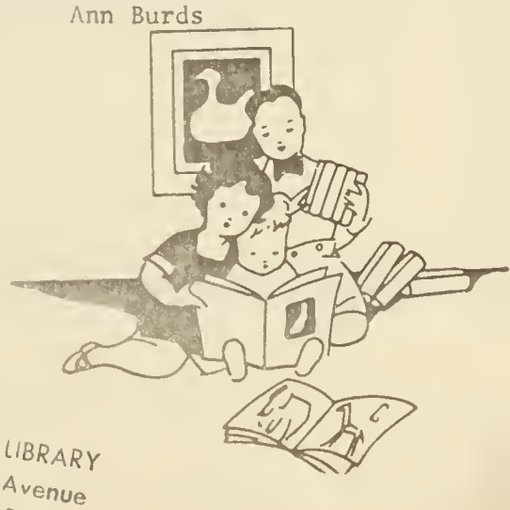
Since I will be replacing Joan South as the Vista Volunteer for this coming year, I feel it is appropriate to introduce myself. My name in Ann Burds and I will be the new State Coordinator of Foster Care in Montana.

After following Joan around this past month, I have been introduced to many new and interesting people throughout the state. I hope to maintain this communication with foster parents, social workers, and state agency people. There are nearly a thousand foster families in this state and it is my sincere desire to meet as many of you as possible in an effort to explain the need of organizing foster parents associations on the county level and eventually becoming a state wide organization.

At this time, I would like to invite any comments or questions you might have concerning a foster parent association to be directed to me. The purpose of this newsletter is for the foster parents, so you are free to use it as you wish.

I would also like to commend Joan South for the great amount of work she has accomplished this past year. With a little bit of luck, I hope to maintain her efforts and with your help and genuine interest, we can work together towards becoming an effective state wide organization in the future.

Ann Burds



"Thoughts About Foster Parents"

Foster parents are like a cool spring
In a burning desert of youthgul pain.
Foster parents open a new horizon
To children who stand in the night alone.

Foster parents nurture children they
have not borne
They bind up wounds they did not open.
Foster parents are the working hands
Of a loving God.

Ezrarene Pitts

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In the June - July issue of the Foster Parents Newsletter, a list of Foster Parents Rights were presented. Below is a list of Foster Childrens' Rights:

Foster Childrens' Rights

Article the first.....to be cherished by a family of his own, either his family helped by readily available services and supports to reassume his care, or an adoptive family or by plan, a continuing foster family.

Article the second....to be nurtured by foster parents who have been selected to meet his individual needs and who are provided services and supports, including specialized education, so that they can grow in their ability to enable the child to reach his potential.

Article the Third.....to receive sensitive, continuing help in understanding and accepting the reasons for his own family's inability to take care of him, and in developing confidence in his own self-worth.

Article the fourth....to receive continuing loving care and respect as a unique human being...a child growing in trust in himself and others.

Article the fifth.....to grow up in freedom and dignity in a neighborhood of people who accept him with understanding, respect and friendship.

Article the sixth.....to receive help in overcoming deprivation or whatever distortion in his emotional, physical, intellectual, social and spiritual growth may have resulted from his early experiences.

Article the seventh...to receive education, training, and career guidance to prepare him for a useful and satisfying life.

Article the Eighth....to receive preparation for citizenship and parenthood through interaction with foster parents and other adults who are consistent role models.

Article the ninth.....to be represented by an attorney at law in administrative or judicial preceedings with access to fair hearings and court review of decisions, so that his best interests are safeguarded.

Article the tenth to receive a high quality of child welfare services, including involvement of the natural parents and his own involvement in major decisions that affect his life.

The Little Things

The little things
Are most worthwhile -
A quiet word,
A look, A smile,
A listening ear
That's quick to share
Another's thoughts
Another's care...
Though sometimes
they may seem
quite small,
These little things
Mean most of all.

Margaret Lindsey

safety!!!

Questionnaire on Common Hazards for Children in the Home

1. Are electric appliances carefully used and their cords well insulated?
2. Are cigarette lighters and matches kept out of children's reach?
3. Are hot pipes insulated?
4. Are the handles of hot pans on the stove out of children's reach?
5. Are the steps, porches and stairways safe?
6. Are windows and screens fitted securely; not easily dislodged?
7. Are floors and rugs slip-proof and trip-proof?
8. Are sharp knives, forks, ice picks, razor blades and guns safely stored?
9. Does the crib side fasten securely?
10. Does the bath tub have a mat and handrail? Do you stay with the child in the tub?
11. Do you destroy plastic dry cleaning bags so children can't get them?
12. Do you keep all medicines out of sight and reach, or locked up?
13. Do you identify medicines before giving and put them back out of reach?
14. Do you avoid taking your own medicines in front of the children?
15. Do you keep toxic substances separate from foods?
16. Are household cleaning and polishing agents stored where children can't get them?
17. Are poisonous substances kept in their original contianers, tightly closed?
18. Do you rinse out empty containers and reapply their lids before disposal?
19. Is the garage or utility room as hazard-free as the house?
20. Is your First Aid Kit well supplied to handle all common accidents?

TECHNIQUE FOR MOUTH-TO-MOUTH VENTILATION

1. Child on his back, clothing loosened, chest exposed, chin lifted up and back.

2. Clean out mouth if dirty, turning face to side for this, then straight up.

3. Pinch child's nose shut (unless nose is to be included in M-T-M).

4. Place your mouth tightly over the child's to get a good seal.

5. Blow your breath into his mouth and watch for expansion of chest to be sure air is going into his lungs, then stop.

6. Remove your mouth so child's lungs can expire. Take a breath, apply your mouth again and blow in again. When you see his chest expand, take your mouth away.

7. Repeat this breath blowing 12-15 times a minute, and stop when the child begins to breathe for himself.

THE ETHICS OF FOSTER PARENTING

Quite a lot has been said and written about the ethics of being a doctor, or a lawyer, or a minister - and there's not much doubt about exactly what it means. If you stop to think about it, nearly every one of life's situations has its own code of ethics - including foster parenting. It's really sort of interesting to think about "extra" qualities foster parents need to have, and which the Agency counts on.

Consider, for example, how conscientious you are in seeing that your foster child gets to the dentist and doctor regularly, and that his prescriptions for glasses are taken care of if needed, and how careful you are to administer medicine as directed by the doctor.

Then too, when the school asks you to come for a conference, you go because you are committed and concerned on behalf of your foster child. And when your foster child has some difficulty somewhere along the line, or gets into some sort of trouble, do you just toss up your hands and say, "Well, he's not mine!" - no, you don't. Your own natural code of foster parent ethics won't let you - you stay in there pitching with all the help you can offer. At home, at school, or in the community - and sometimes at great inconvenience and personal sacrifice of time and energy - you persistently try to help your foster child.

There's more? Absolutely - ethics means that money sent for your child's board or clothing is conscientiously used for the child. He eats what you eat, and you shop long and carefully for clothing so your foster child presents a neat, attractive appearance - exactly as your own children do.

The list could probably go on and on, but there's one thing in particular that's pretty important - and it's this: in order for you to understand and help your foster child, you have to know quite a lot about his background and his past life and the worker tells you these things in strictest confidence.

Of all the ethical considerations, this is probably the most difficult since, after all, we all like to have something to say that will hold people's attention - or, sometimes you might feel the neighbors would be more tolerant and compassionate toward your foster child "if only they understood", and so, with the best intentions in the world, you divulge confidential details about your child.

Unfortunately, it never seems to work out at all the way you meant it to. Instead of tolerance and mercy, you are horrified to discover that your confidential information has become public property and is being used to judge, condemn or ostercize your foster child. Your child is humiliated, shamed, and angry - and you feel guilty - and angry too. But it was you who "opened the bag of feathers" - your confidences cannot be recalled any more than the feathers can.

Even without such an experience, you know that interesting gossip covers a neighborhood with all the speed of a flash flood. What it really comes down to is that keeping confidential information strictly to yourself is not only a reflection on your ethical behavior, but a certain indication of the mature judgement required of a foster parent. Be sure your confidential information never gets away from you - you can never get it back.

Please remember that you are part of a professional team which is working hard to preserve and improve the life of a child and the functioning of his family.

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A QUOTE

From Winston Churchill's Novel
"SAVROLA"

"She had nursed him from his birth with a devotion and care which knew no break. It is a strange thing, the love of these women. Perhaps it is the only disinterested affection in the world. The mother loves her child; that is maternal nature. The youth loves his sweetheart; that too may be explained. The dog loves his master; he feeds him. A man loves his friend; he has stood by him perhaps in doubtful moments. In all there are reasons, but the love of a foster-mother for her charge appears absolutely irrational. It is one of the few proofs, not to be explained even by the association of ideas, that the nature of mankind is superior to mere utilitatianism, and that his destinies are high."

News from Helena ------

H.E.L.P. (Helena's Experts on Little People), will soon elect officers for the coming year.
We are also in the process of adopting our constitution.
A group of foster mothers have been busy sorting clothes and find they have lots of teenage girls clothes. Hopefully some can be used for school. If you are interested in some of these extra clothes, call 442-2774, and we would be happy to help you if we can.
Our schedule for the coming year looks exciting - with a class in first aid to start it off.

Let us hear from <u>your</u> local organizations.
Send information, questions, or letters to:

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Attn Ann Burds

FIRST CLASS